health-related initiatives, was unable to provide figures on how many people will be affected by the new rules.

GF guidelines stipulate that a country can appeal a grant decision when the same proposal has been rejected in 2 consecutive rounds, and only when the appeal is based on a significant and obvious error made by the technical review panel.

Rosie Vanek, a spokesperson for GF, told *CMAJ* that they were strengthening management of the grants and the GF Secretariat. This will include improving harmonization with partners to avoid overlap and improved technical support.

The GF's performance-based grant funding model features a number of mechanisms to ensure accountability, including effective use of the funds to meet the recipient's targets with respect to combating disease, and ensuring that funds are used in a transparent and legitimate manner.

"As in the case of the suspension of grants to Uganda in 2005, GF takes any indication of misuse of funds very seriously," Vanek says.

Togolese authorities say 24 000 people in need of antiretrovirals were desperate in January after the GF halted a US\$15.5 million grant citing irregularities in management of the funding. "The Global Fund has said that it would not renew this grant because of the quality of the data provided," says Rosine Coulibaly, head of the local UN office.

GF grants have also helped treat 1.4 million people with TB, and distributed 11.3 million insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria. — Wairagala Wakabi, Kampala, Uganda

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News @ a glance

Hep-C settlement: The roughly 5000 so-called forgotten victims of Canada's tainted blood scandal, who were infected with hepatitis C from the blood system before Jan. 1, 1986, or after July 1, 1990, are poised to receive \$962 million in compensation under a \$1.023-billion settlement agreement reached between the federal government and plaintiffs of

class-action suits in BC, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario. The agreement, which is still subject to the approval of the courts, will allocate compensation based on such factors as age at the time of infection; severity of the illness and lost earnings. Lawyers representing the forgotten victims say they'll continue to pursue litigation against the provinces. — Wayne Kondro, *CMAJ*

CMA contenders: Three former presidents of the Quebec Medical Association are competing to become CMA president during 2008–09. The contenders are radiologist Dr. Robert Ouellet, family physician Dr. André Senikas and Dr. Daniel Wagner, also a family physician. The results of the mail-in voting will be announced Mar. 8. The nominee must then be ratified at the CMA's annual meeting in August.

Barbara Sibbald

Kudos from AMWA: Peggy Robinson (above), *CMAJ*'s current manager of submissions and peer review, and a former managing editor, has been named a fellow of the 5300-member American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). The fellowship is awarded "in recognition of professional accomplishments in medical communication and contributions to the association." There are about 85 AMWA fellows, including former *CMAJ* editor-in-chief Bruce Squires, and former managing editor Ann Bolster.

Robinson served as treasurer of the AMWA Canada Chapter for 13 years and continues to serve on the AMWA budget and finance committee. She has also presented noncredit workshops, and helped organize a conference.

Diabetes discovery: Scientists at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children have proof that the body's nervous system helps trigger type 1 diabetes (*Cell* 2006;127:1123–35). The scientists found that TRPV1+ pancreatic sensory neurons control islet inflammation and insulin resistance. Eliminating these neurons in diabetes-prone mice prevented insulinitis and diabetes. The researchers, including immunologist Dr. Hans Michael Dosch, expect results from human studies within a year or two.

HIV/AIDS in over-50s: Approximately 8% of people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS each year in Ontario are over 50. This may be a "conservative estimate," says Susan Silcox, a social worker in Specialized Geriatric Services at Parkwood Hospital in London, Ont., because many of the "medical conditions that would suggest HIV are similar to a lot of other medical conditions in an older person," including fatigue, weight loss, dementia, skin rashes and swollen lymph nodes. If physicians don't take a sexual history or test for HIV/AIDS, misdiagnosis could occur. "Don't assume just because someone's older, they're not sexually active," says Silcox. She also suggests physicians discuss risks and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and infections in older people. — Lynne Swanson, London, Ont.

Pandemic plan: The revised *Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector* weighs in at 609 pages, including new sections on public health measures and surveillance. It also reflects the fact that over 5 million treatment courses of antiviral drugs are, or will shortly be, stockpiled. The goal is to have 5.5 million courses — reportedly sufficient to treat anyone who would seek treatment, reports the Public Health Agency of Canada. — Compiled by Barbara Sibbald, *CMAJ*

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